DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 101 046 UD 014 739

AUTHOR Gaile, Sandra L.
TITLE Socialization for Educability in a Cross-Cultural Context: Some of the Findings of the UCLA Hawaii Project.
PUB DATE Apr 74
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Anthropological Association (Santa Monica, California, April 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Aptitude; Classroom Research; Early Experience; *Educational Anthropology; Family Characteristics; Family School Relationship; Field Interviews; *Kindergarten Children; Research Methodology; Rural Schools; Sex Differences; *Socialization; Student Teacher Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Hawaii

ABSTRACT

Research was conducted in a rural Hawaiian school and community among kindergarten Polynesian-American children and their families in order to determine what situational attributes and home environments were associated with better school performance. Classroom behavioral observations were conducted, the teacher was asked to evaluate the student, each child was individually interviewed, and other family information was collected using ethnographic fieldwork methods. Upon evaluating the data, differences were found in the frequency of task or work oriented behavior which varied according to the number of siblings in the family. That is, children from smaller families attended to the teacher more closely and they were more frequently found to be "on-task" during the behavioral observations. Some Sex differences in behavior were also noted. Girls were more likely to use their verbal communication channels to meet the demands of the classroom setting than boys were. Hawaiian children are expected to learn through the combined processes of close observation, social imitation, trial and error and without the benefit of indulgent or encouraging parental reinforcement for academic work at home. So it seems obvious that problems arise when they enter a school system based on principles of intentional instruction. (Author/JM)

ED101046

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Socialization for Educability in a Cross-Cultural Context: Some of the Findings of the UCLA Hawaii Project

by

Sandra L. Gaile

Department of Anthropology

University of California

Los Angeles

Presented at the 1974 Southwest Anthropological Association Meetings

Santa Monica, California, April, 1974

5

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

UD014739

ABSTRACT

Research was conducted in a rural Hawaiian school and community among kindergarten Polynesian-American children and their families in order to determine what situational attributes and home environments were associated with better school performance. Classroom behavioral observations were conducted, the teacher was asked to evaluate the students, each child was individually interviewed, and other family information was collected using ethnographic fieldwork methods. Upon evaluating the data, differences were found in the frequency of task or work oriented behavior which varied according to the number of siblings in the child's family. That is, children from smaller families attended to the teacher more closely and they were more frequently found to be "on-task" during the behavioral observations. Some Sex differences in behavior were also noted.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Socialization for Educability in a Cross-Cultural Context

Judging from current achievement measures and I.Q. test results, it appears that Polynesian-Hawaiian children are not deriving the full benefits possible from Western style education. Either the schools are failing to provide Hawaiian children with the same quality of education they provide other children, or Hawaiian children are unable or unwilling to take full advantage of teaching, knowledge, and potential learning experiences offered by public schools. Since the elementary school system in the state of Hawaii is standardized in terms of programs offered and per capita expenditures on each child, it would appear more likely that it is something in the backgrounds or experiences of Polynesian-Hawaiian children that is causing their poor academic showing.

Whatever the reasons may be, Hawaiian children are not as educable as other cultural or socioeconomic groups of children attending the schools with them.

There are a number of factors which can contribute to children's educability including general state of physical health, adequacy of daily nutrition (Birch and Gussow 1970), possible congenital handicaps, genetic or inherited intellectual capacity, and the various cultural/social factors such as language difficulties, differences in motivations, and differences in relevant knowledge (Williams 1970; Gallimore and Howard 1968; Gladwin 1970;

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Blank and Solomon 1968). Although the potential influence of any one of these factors on the educability and achievement of Hawaiian children can not be overlooked, the literature indicates that the factor most potentially fruitful for study now and the most likely to be responsible for current differences in educability is the factor of differences in cultural and social backgrounds of Hawaiian children (also see Beaglehole 1937; Coleman et al 1966).

It has been acknowledged for some time now that children from certain cultural, ethnic, or SES groups are more educable than others (Hess and Shipman 1968; Hess 1968; Miles and Charters 1970) and it has been suggested that parents are at least partially responsible, consciously or unconsciously, for preparing their children to meet school demands (Gladwin 1970). The hidden curriculum in the home (Strodtbeck 1964) as it is referred to may allow the development of overlapping expectations between the school and the home with regard to children's behaviors, goal motivations, and relations to adults.

Parents can foster educability in their children in at least four known ways:

First, they can train the child in cognitive skills specific to the classroom. That is, they can to a certain extent stimulate and help the child to perceive and evaluate the environment in ways which will be helpful to his conceptualization of abstract problems later in the classroom (Blank and Solomon 1968; Hess and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Shipman 1965).

Second, parents can provide the child with the proper motivations to try to succeed within the formal learning situation by successfully communicating to the child their belief that education is important to his future (Katz 1967; Winterbottom 1958).

Third, parents can reinforce the acquisition of standard language skills which will be essential in a school classroom conducted in standard English. Within the home they can encourage language precision and complexity in day to day activities (Staats et al 1970).

Fourth, parents can teach the child the role of being a pupil. They can familiarize the child with teaching processes by introducing pre-academic materials such as numbers, the alphabet, and basic shapes. They can follow through with explanations after introducing new concepts. And they can reinforce the child's persistence in seeking solutions and in understanding difficult problems and tasks.

LeVine (1969) has pointed out that when parents consciously try to shape children's behavior and provide knowledge to meet certain environmental requirements, their actions have intended and unintentional consequences. For example, parental help and supervision offered to the child when learning everyday tasks and basic concepts has two outcomes. First, the content or knowledge communicated by parents will probably be very helpful

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

later in the school setting. Second, the child has learned from the parents to accept individual adult attention, verbal instructions, and the tutoring process per se.

Certainly what children know is important, but how they learn to learn is particularly essential to understand in this society where the school format assumes a familiarity with verbal instruction. Hawaiian children may have a style of learning very different from that of diadic interaction between adults/parents and children. This may be a contributing, or at least one important cause for their difficulties in formal Western style schools.

In order to explore this possibility, research was designed to examine the extent to which Hawaiian children seemed familiar with and comfortable with the predominant learning style of the school, that is, direct verbal teaching.

HYPOTHESIS

This pilot study was intended to generate future hypothesis and answer some informal core questions. For instance, could it be that the children who do better academically than others are the children who accept adult teacher figures and are more comfortable with them in the verbally mediated format. Surely the children who were less familiar with teacher methods per se would have more trouble coping in school than those who were familiar with it.

METHOD

Subjects. The fourteen children involved in the study were about

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

five years old at the time of research and constituted the kindergartent class at one rural Hawaiian elementary school. Half of the children were girls; the other half were boys. Culturally, they claimed full or at least part Hawaiian identity. Their parents could be described as lower SES in terms of occupations and educational levels.

PROCEDURE

The children were individually observed and their behaviors formally recorded while they were in the classroom. During the twenty minutes of class observation done on each child, assessments were made about their school task orientation. That is, during the first five seconds of each minute, an "on", "off", "between", or "disruptive" label was applied to that sample of behavior. In the remaining fifty-five seconds of each minute, a descriptive protocal of the child's ongoing behavior was recorded and later qualitatively evaluated. Outside of class, ethnographic field notes were kept on these and other children in their cultural context. Teacher ratings of the fourteen children's abilities and behaviors in class were collected and later compared to actual classroom behaviors observed. In addition to these materials, each child was taken aside alone by the investigator and asked a series of simple questions about a picture sequence. The purpose of the questioning was merely to determine the child's reactions to direct verbal questioning; that is, would his task orientation be "work" or "non-work" in a situation demanding a

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

verbal response and monitored by a single adult.

RESULTS

1. Children's Class Behavior Compared to Their Behavior in the Adult-Child Question Session.

In comparing children's observed classroom behavior to their behavior and responses in the question session, there was a positive relation found between the number of "work" related verbal responses which children gave in the question session and the number of "on" task behaviors they displayed in the classroom. Children who understood what was expected of them when answering direct questions in the adult-child session knew what was expected of them in the classroom by the teacher.

There was positive relationship found between the verbosity of children in the question session and their propensity to verbally solicit the teacher's attention to their work in the classroom context. Children who were more verbal in their responses to direct adult questions were also more verbal in that they asked the teacher more questions in class. They displayed overall better facility to deal with adults verbally, both when questioned and when questioning.

2. Children's Classroom Behavior Compared to "Other" Factors.

When comparing children's classroom behavior to "other" factors, there was a positive relationship found between the number of years of maternal education and the intensity of visual orientation toward the teacher. Children with better educated

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

mothers looked at the teacher more frequently in class.

There was also a positive relationship between the total number of children in the family and the intensity of visual orientation to the teacher in class. That is, children from smaller families looked at or stared at the teacher more often in the classroom than other children. Perhaps this is because parents with fewer children (at least theoretically) have more time available to spend with each child. They may consciously or unintentionally contribute to their child's orientation to adult figures. This would certainly be an interesting tendency to examine.

3. Children's Behavior in the Adult-child Question Session Compared to Teacher's Judgements of Children's Behavior.

On comparing the children's responses and behavior in the question session to teacher's judgements of children behavior, there was discerned a significant positive relationship between the children who the teacher judged as more attentive and the children who had the most "work" oriented responses to questions in the adult-child session. Both of these measures of attentive or "on" task behavior seem to be tapping a true work orientation in the behavior of the children in the classroom context and in responding to adult questions.

4. Teacher's Judgements of Children's Behavior to "Other" Factors.

When comparing teacher's judgements of children's behavior to other factors, the correlations found were interesting although they need to be examined in terms of other findings. First,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

children from larger families (i.e. more siblings) were judged by the teacher to have relatively poorer memory abilities. Second, children with relatively better educated fathers were assessed by the teacher to have better memory abilities. Third, children with better educated mothers were considered more attentive by the teacher.

5. Relationships Among the Qualitative Classroom Behaviors Observed.

In examining the relationships among the qualitative classroom behaviors, more than two-thirds of the behaviors were found to be directed towards other children while less than one-third were directed or oriented towards adult figures such as the teacher. It is impossible without an adequate cross-cultural comparison group to know whether this percentage of peer oriented behaviors is typical for five year old children in a classroom setting or unique to Hawaiian children. Since it is often implied that it is because of the stronger peer group orientation of Hawaiian children that they show such poor academic performance, perhaps this should be examined more closely in the future.

6. Sex Differences.

There were no significant sex differences between boys and girls in the distribution of "on", "off", "between", and "disruptive" task behaviors observed in the classroom. But the patterning of the other qualitative behaviors was different for boys and girls. Boys more often than girls talked to and physically approached other children while in the classroom. Girls more often than boys verbally solicited the attention of the teacher to their work or themselves while in class.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In the adult-child question session, there were no differences in the percentages of "work" or "non-work" responses to questions by boys and girls. But boys used fewer absolute numbers of words in their "work" responses than girls did. Boys used nearly twice as many absolute numbers of words in their "non-work" responses as girls did.

Although this is admittedly a small sample of children it is interesting to note that the girls were more likely to use their verbal communication channels to meet the demands of the classroom setting than boys were. Certainly the origins of these patterns and the extent to which such sexual differences could be found in the naturalistic environments of the children should be studied in greater depth.

DISCUSSION

Overall it seems that the children who more competently handled the demands of the experimental adult-child question session were likely to be the same children who were judged to be more attentive by the teacher in the classroom and the same children who were actually observed to be more "on" task in the independent classroom observations conducted by this field-worker. In all three of these measures, they were more "task" or "work" oriented and more adult oriented.

Now it becomes a question of whether these abilities to orient toward academic tasks and adults are highly valued in the Hawaiian homes and in the community context as they are in the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

classroom itself. That is, in the two different contexts, are these same set of behavior considered competent and desirable.

In turning to the ethnographic field material for answers, it seemed that many Hawaiian parents did not generally practice verbal teaching of their children nor did they encourage these kinds of academically oriented adult-child verbal interaction patterns. Logically, children who were familiar with adult teaching processes, with materials used therein such as books, and familiar with responding to verbal questions would be more prepared for interaction with a teacher in the classroom context.

Hertzig (1968) has suggested that parents in higher SES or middle-class Anglo families want their children to learn to complete certain tasks earlier and become competent at them. Thus, they are more likely to actively introduce academic tasks to children and encourage children at younger ages. According to Whiting and Child (1953) independence and task training in the U.S. was particularly severe in the sense that parents did expect their children to master many difficult tasks at earlier ages. Initially parents would provide close supervision so that the child learned how to do the task properly. Such research indicates that the emphasis in the learning process was on directed verbal teaching. This was true even when non-academic tasks such as putting away toys or explaining simple tasks around the house were involved. Whereas the original intent of middle-class parents may have been simply to get the child

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

to do a task correctly, the important unintended outcome of such training is that children learn a learning style; that is, they learn to learn through the process of verbalized adult instruction.

In Hawaii, however, parents did not usually employ direct verbal instruction or teaching. Direct teaching which did occur in the Hawaiian context often involved non-verbal direction or guidance in how to perform other sorts of tasks. There was a heavy overall emphasis on strict obedience and respectfulness towards adults. In the teaching of manual or physical skills (e.g. making grass skirts, learning to dance, and sewing), the verbal component of instruction was not prominent. The "teacher" was more likely to just act as a model while the child or "student" observed closely and learned through trial and error how to complete the activity.

Hawaiians went so far as to register embarrassment and humiliation at the prospect of being tutored while in class. As one of our project workers astutely observed, it seemed as if being tutored implied being socially incompetent. One of the older female informants explained that among her people when a person wanted to learn a new skill, he or she would find a model to learn from or copy. It was likely however, she said, that the person would teach himself. "My people are self-taught" she explained.

Perhaps self-teaching is really just the stated ideal, but

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

if the informant was correct, it might be easier to understand one of the more important difficulties involved when Hawaiian children encounter Western style education. They are expected to learn through the combined processes of close observation, social imitation, trial and error and without the benefit of indulgent or encouraging parental reinforcement for academic work at home. So it seems obvious that problems arise when they enter a school system based on principles of intentional instruction.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. and R. Walters
1963 Social Learning and Personality Development. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Barker, R. G.
1964 Observation of Behavior: Ecological Approaches. Journal of Mount Sinai Hospital. Vol. 31.

Blank, Marion and Frances Solomon
1968 A Tutorial Language Program to Develop Abstract Thinking in Socially Disadvantaged Pre-school Children. Child Development. Vol. 39:379.

Campbell, John D.
1964 Peer Relations in Childhood. In Review of Child Development Research. M. Hoffman and L. Hoffman Eds. Russell Sage Institute.

Coleman, J. S. et al
1966 Equality of Educational Opportunity. U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Freeburg, N. E. and D. T. Payne
1967 Parental Influence on Cognitive Development in Early Childhood: A Review. Child Development. Vol. 38:65-87.

Gallimore, R., J. W. Boggs, and C. E. Jordan
1974 Culture, Behavior, and Education: A Study of Hawaiian-Americans. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Gallimore, Ronald
1972 Variations in the Motivational Antecedents of Achievement Among Hawaii's Ethnic Groups. In Mental Health in Asia and The Pacific. Vol. 2. W. Lebra Ed. Honolulu: East-West Center Press.

Gallimore, Ronald and Alan Howard Eds.
1968 Studies in a Hawaiian Community: Na Makamaka o Nanakuli. Honolulu, Hawaii: Bernice P. Bishop Museum. Pacific Anthropological Records, No. 1.

Gladwin, Thomas
1970 East is a Big Bird. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES CON'D

Gump, Paul V., Phil Schoggen, and Fritz Redl
1963 The Behavior of the Same Child in Different Milieus. In The Stream of Behavior. R. G. Barker Ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Hertzig, M. E., H. G. Birch, A. Thomas, and O. A. Mendez
1968 Class and Ethnic Differences in Responsiveness of Pre-school Children to Cognitive Demands. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development. Vol. 33. No. 1 Serial No. 117.

Hess, Robert D.
1968 Early Education as Socialization. In Early Education. Robert D. Hess and Roberta Meyer Bear Eds. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co.

Hess, R., and V. Shipman
1968 Maternal Influences Upon Early Learning: The Cognitive Environment of Urban Pre-school Children. In Early Education. Robert D. Hess and Roberta Meyer Bear Eds. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co.

Inkeles, Alex
1966 Social Structure and the Socialization of Competence. Harvard Educational Review. Vol. 36:265-283.

Inkeles, Alex
1963 Social Change and Social Character: The Role of Parental Mediation. In Personality and Social Systems. N. J. Smelser and W. J. Smelser Eds. New York: J. Wiley.

LeVine, Robert
1969 Culture, Personality, and Socialization: An Evolutionary View. In The Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research. D. Goslin Ed. Chicago: Rand McNalley and Co.

Levy, R.
1968 Child Management Structure and Its Implications in a Tahitian Family. In A Modern Introduction to the Family. E. Vogel and N. Bell Eds. New York: Free Press.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Maccoby, E. E.
1959 Role Taking in Childhood and its Consequences for Social Learning. Child Development. Vol. 30:239-252.

Minturn, Leigh and W. W. Lambert
1964 Mothers of Six Cultures. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Mischel, W.
1968 Personality and Assessment. New York: Wiley.

Pukui, Mary Kawena
1942 Hawaiian Beliefs and Customs During Infancy and Childhood. Occasional Papers of Bernice P. Bishop Museum. Vol. 16. No. 17.

Selltiz, Claire, Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch, and Stuart W. Cook
1959 Research Methods In Social Relations. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Strodtbeck, Fred L.
1964 The Hidden Curriculum in the Middle-Class Home. In Urban Education and Cultural Deprivation. C. D. Hunnicutt Ed. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.

Whiting, J. W. M., and Irvin Child
1953 Child Training and Personality. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Whiting, John W. M. et al
1966 Field Guide for a Study of Socialization. New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

Williams, Thomas Rhys
1967 Field Methods in the Study of Culture. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Winterbottom, E.
1958 The Relation of Need for Achievement to Learning Experiences in Independence and Mastery. In Motives in Fantasy, Action, and Society. J. W. Atkinson Ed. Princeton, N. J.: Van Nostrand.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE